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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 327. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 6, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

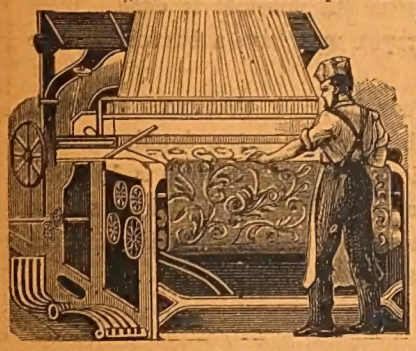
IF YOU INTEND TO BUY

Buy New Carpets at the Price of Old.

It would be ridiculous to buy old carpets, old designs, shop-worn, out-of-date goods, when you can purchase a stylish GENUINE, WOVEN, REVERSIBLE TRIUMPH CARPET suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., for

4/- Each. 4s. Postal Order or 50 Stamps, **4/- Each.**

handsomely bordered and woven in fifty different patterns and colourings, to suit all requirements, and LARGE ENOUGH TO COVER ANY ORDINARY-SIZED ROOM. These Carpets will be sold as an advertisement for the goods of the British Carpet Weaving Company, below the actual cost of production. Thousands have already been sold at almost double above prices.



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SPECIAL OFFER—Two Carpets and Two Rugs for 9s. 6d.; Four Carpets and Four Rugs for 18s.; Eight Carpets and Eight Rugs for 35s.

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The *Queen* says: "Decidedly stouter and handsomer than any of the kind, the price being the astounding part of the matter." *Schoolmistress:* "For style, durability, and cheapness they cannot be beaten." *Penny Illustrated Paper:* "Manufactured in every variety of colour, and is one of the most surprising bargains I have seen." *Church Bells:* "Truly wonderful value."

Hundreds of unsolicited testimonials are being received from delighted purchasers who have had these carpets in use for years.

Stafford Road Post Office, Wolverhampton. M. A. Dudley, writes:—"Having purchased two of your Carpets between three and four years ago, I am thoroughly satisfied, and have recommended them to several people, who I know have tried them, and are equally satisfied."

65, Abbey Street, Nuneaton, Warwickshire. "Mrs. Bostock will thank the British Carpet Weaving Co. to send her one of their Carpets, for which she encloses postal order. She has had one of these Carpets in constant wear for some years now, and finds it the best wearing and cheapest carpet she can get."

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On receipt of this order form, and Postal Order or stamps, we guarantee to send any goods, as above, to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Money returned if not approved.
(Signed) THE BRITISH CARPET WEAVING CO.

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The BEST of all TONICS and a GENTLE APERIENT.

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IF you require a reliable remedy for the relief of Superfluous Fat, send for a box of my "H.D." Pills. No starvation required. You may eat and drink what you like yet I guarantee to either sex a permanent reduction of 5 to 7 lbs. weekly. They are agreeable to take and harmless, being entirely of a vegetable preparation, are successful in the most stubborn cases, and never fail to improve both health and figure. Their action is rapid, certain, safe, and entirely free from inconvenience. They are pearl-coated and tasteless, and highly recommended by the Medical Profession. Price 2s. 9d., 4s. 6d., and 11s. Prof. F. A. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

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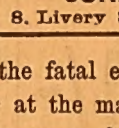

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Warranted perfectly harmless, and made from the Prescription of a most celebrated Physician.

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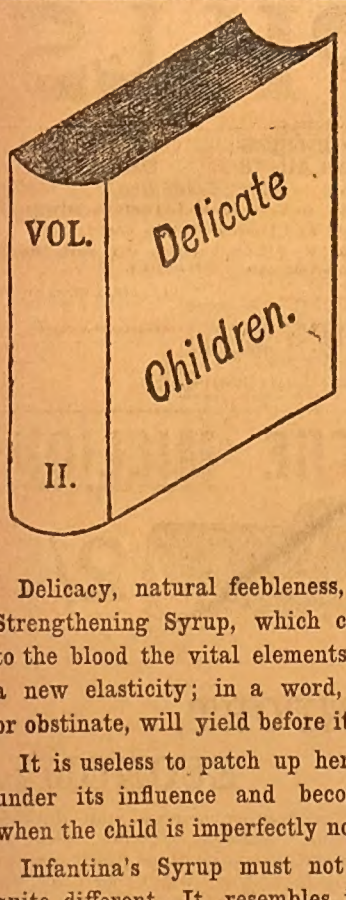
A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs "T. D.," 87, Strand, London.



Parents will not realize the fatal error of neglecting the first symptoms of delicacy in their children. Looking at the matter from a purely selfish point of view, it is a considerable saving to one's purse, for medical authorities all admit that one single dose of medicine given in time will be worth 999 after the mischief is done. Once allow the seeds of ill-health to sprout, and remember you will have a harvest to cope with.

If there is constitutional weakness in yourself, bear in mind that your children are liable to inherit it, and therefore that their ailments warrant a double amount of anxiety and care. If you attack the delicacy tonically before the child is 15 years of age, and it is a complete waste of time to treat it in any other way, the whole system will be built up and the nutrition of the body renewed and strengthened, and the result arrived at will be a thoroughly sound and healthy organisation.

Because your children are delicate and weak, do not imagine for a moment that they need remain so, for youth responds readily to a tonic treatment.

No matter how undermined the constitution may be, it can be permanently reconstructed by putting new blood tonically into the system.

Delicacy, natural feebleness, and languor in children cannot prevail against the curative properties of Infantina's Strengthening Syrup, which contains all the necessary ingredients for rebuilding a delicate constitution. It restores to the blood the vital elements eliminated by fragility, gives the brain its necessary stimulus, and the muscular system a new elasticity; in a word, what is lacking in failing health, it supplies. All delicacy, no matter how chronic or obstinate, will yield before it.

It is useless to patch up here and there; go to the root of the mischief and attack that, every organ will then come under its influence and become healthy. It is too well known that a delicate chest leads to consumption only when the child is imperfectly nourished; germs find no soil in a perfectly healthy body.

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 327.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING APRIL 6, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE LOVE OF SISTER MARIA

THERE it was, just as it had been years ago—the long stretch of sand dazzling white in the sunshine, the high grey rocks encircling the little harbour as with a sheltering arm, the broad stretch of ocean beyond, with white caps dancing over it. Two or three fishing-boats rocked slowly in the distance, and an occasional gull swept the blue horizon with its shining wings. He felt as though he had opened a book and come unexpectedly upon a picture known in childhood, and long unseen, save in the mirror of memory.

"It is beautiful," he said slowly, "and yet——"

He did not finish the sentence, but turned and walked the length of the beach.

Strong as he looked, Percy St. John was a victim of disease—a disease which, as yet, his elastic figure, firm cheek, and bright eyes refused to indicate. But his physician's skill taught him the truth, and with feverish anxiety he watched the development of each new symptom, as a man unrolls with his own hand the paper bearing his death sentence. On this, the morning of his arrival in the little seaport, with not an acquaintance in the village, and with the words, "Here for health!" indelibly graven before his mental vision, it was not to be expected that he could look on anything with joy-seeing eyes.

He reached the end of the sandy stretch, passed round a high rock, and came upon a figure of a young girl, standing barefoot in the shallows, with a bunch of seaweed in her arms. Her back was half-turned to him, and she was singing vigorously in a clear, full voice. She saw him directly; the song died upon her lips, the red colour in her smooth, sunburnt cheeks deepened vividly, and she dropped the seaweed on her feet, which were strangely fair in contrast with her slim brown hands.

"I beg your pardon," he said courteously. "I did not expect to see anybody here; and you—you did not expect to see anybody here; and so I have startled you."

The girl had surveyed him critically and unconfusedly as he spoke. She liked him. A smile dimpled her mouth.

"You need not go," she said quickly, as he stepped back, "unless—you want to."

"Then I will stay, thank you. What beautiful specimens of seaweed you have. Would you care to part with some?" He bent, and took up a piece like a pale pink feather.

"Take it if you like it—take it all," she urged.

"Oh, no; you did not understand me. I thought of collecting some to take home with me, and this is the prettiest I have ever seen. I wanted to purchase the rarest specimens."

"*That* you can find anywhere. Take it!" she insisted; and at the sight of the coin he had taken from his pocket she stepped quickly from the water and went a little way from him, where she seated herself on a shelf of a rock, and began to draw on a pair of queer little wooden shoes.

"Now I have offended her," mused St. John, "worse luck!" He began to gather the seaweed from the sand. "I am always clumsy nowadays. I wonder why?"

"You should see the place where it grows!" said a soft voice at his elbow; and there she stood beside him again with a childlike smile on her lips.

"Where is it? I will go to it."

"Come, I will take you; I can row," she answered. "Leave that here: there is much more beautiful growing there. That I get to stuff pillows with." She pushed away the bunch he had selected with the broad toe of her shoe; and he followed, feeling strangely glad in this human companionship of hers.

It was while the little boat danced gaily over the waters of the bay that he noticed again how pretty she was in an odd type of her own; her large eyes, as blue as the dark water around them, her little head uncovered save with her thick brown hair, that fell from it in two heavy plaits far below the waist, and her strong, sun-kissed arms waving in rhythmic motion with the oars.

"My name is St. John—Dr. St. John," he said. "I am here for my health. I hope to get strong soon and go back to my work."

She looked at him critically from under her dark lashes. "You do not look ill," she murmured. "You look big and strong."

"I am big," he admitted, smiling, "and I am trying hard to get strong. And your name—won't you tell me what it is?"

"Maria." She pronounced it as though she caressed it—in a slow, sweet fashion that sounded like "Mareeya."

"How pretty it is!" he exclaimed. "I have a little friend who has the same name: but she pronounces it as she spells it. I think I must teach her to pronounce it as you do when I

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go back. She will be so pleased to hear of you, and your beautiful home, and your boat which you row yourself." A shadow crossed his face.

"Why do you look sad when you talk of her?" the girl asked.

"Because she is a cripple. She will never walk again," he said sadly. "You know, I have charge of a big house, a hospital, where all these poor little sorrowful children are brought and cared for—hundreds of them. I miss them very much, and they will miss me; and that is the reason I must hurry and get well for their sakes."

"A house full of children who will never walk again!" Her great eyes opened wide; never in her free, bright life had she heard of a child who could not walk after it had once been taught.

"Oh, no; many of them are cured, and go out strong and well, and bright for the rest of their lives." His dark eyes glowed with happy memories of these.

Her face beamed with interest; she asked question after question, and he had hardly answered them all when they reached the cavern where the seaweed grew.

A skilful sweep of the oars brought them under the cool, grey rocks overhanging the entrance and into a floating sea of the delicate plants. She watched him in pleased silence as he raised piece after piece from the water and held them in the clearer light.

"Do you know," he said, examining them closely, "they have a deeper interest for me than their mere beauty arouses."

"Yes?" questioned the girl.

"They have medicinal properties; there is a medicine, iodine, made from them. Iodine brings strength and rest from pain to many of my poor little hospital children. I must make a collection of these to carry home with me. Who knows how valuable some of them may be!"

"Oh, may I help you?" she asked breathlessly: "I might find some very fine ones, and that might help the poor children in the home you tell me of."

"Oh, may I help you?"

He smiled softly as he thanked her, and pressed the little brown hand next to him. She had never seen so courteous and gentle a man before.

As they rowed home, with a great wet mass of the delicate grasses piled between them, she was strangely silent, with a wonderful tenderness in her splendid eyes. He saw that the story of the suffering children had sunk deep in her responsive heart.

When they parted on the beach it was as friends, and friends who had at heart a common cause. He wondered how the morning had slipped away, and she dreamed all the afternoon of long lines of snowy beds, from which pale faces looked expectantly, and seemed to feel the thrill that brightened them at sight of a handsome face, a merry laugh, a strong arm, such as she had known for the first time to-day.

Dr. St. John had just finished his breakfast next morning, and started for a stroll on the beach, when Maria came, with sparkling eyes, to meet him.

"Oh, come with me!" she entreated, forgetting, in her earnestness, any greeting. "Such a beautiful place outside the bay—such seaweed! Come!"

She was so excited that she skipped often in her walk with him to where the boat lay; and when they were in it she rowed so fast that her cheeks crimsoned, her hair streamed in unheeded riot to the wind, and her breath came through her parted lips in short, quick gasps. In vain he insisted, entreated, half-scolded; her impulsive spirit could not be suppressed, and quietude reigned not again in her heart until his own delight and enthusiasm in the beautiful spot to which she guided him brought satisfaction.

This was the beginning of a close companionship. St. John revelled in the charm of a nature the pure simplicity of which was unlike anything he had known before; and the girl's heart glowed when the fisher-folk spoke of the fine young doctor as "Maria's friend." "Fine" meant to them bright, generous, congenial. Percy St. John was all of these. He had a way of adapting himself to other people, even the simplest.

The days went by—days that brought no ripple of excitement to the little seaport, the serene monotony of which, calm with sunshine, pure with sea-winds, put new strength in St. John's veins, and, gradually, new hope in his heart. He grew stronger.

To Maria they were a revelation. No shadow dimmed their brightness until one morning, as they floated idly in the boat, the Doctor said suddenly: "Maria, I must go home in a week. I wish I could take you with me."

Her heart sank at his first words and rose at his last. He saw the light in her eyes, and added kindly, "But that would never do. You would pine there, in city walls, for your sea, and your sky, and your boat."

He was sorry he had suggested it, for her lips trembled; she bent her head, and presently a big tear splashed on her round arm.

"Never mind," he went on soothingly: "you must not feel sorry about it, because I am going to leave you something to do for me."

She looked up quickly from under wet lashes.

"I want you to stay here and row and live out in the fresh air, as you have always done, until you are well grown and strong—a woman. And then you will want to leave your boat, perhaps; and, if you do, I will send for you to come to my hospital and help me nurse my poor little children. It would be too much for you now."

She smiled a little at the thought, but looked so grave again that he was afraid for several days to broach the subject of departure.

A "wet spell," as the fisher-people called it, came after this, and during its duration the Doctor kept his room closely; while Maria, accustomed to the chilly dampness and desolation without, haunted the beach like a restless wraith, wondered at her strange discomfort, and watched and longed for the sun again.

At last it came; the sea-fog lifted, the waves danced merrily, and she waited by the boat for her friend. But he did not come, and a sudden terror seized her heart. Perhaps he was ill—and she had not known it—she had not been to see—he would think her heartless. Tears blinded her eyes at the thought. She ran as fast as her nimble feet would carry her to the cottage of old Lois, where he lived—so fast that her

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breath was quite gone when she reached it, and she must needs gasp hard as she knocked at the door to regain it.

The old woman came, grumbling, to answer the summons. "Oh, it is you, is it?" she called, angrily, as she discovered her visitor. "To come and batter my door till I think the pig is got loose, or the boat swept away; an' I leave all my dinner to burn!" With this she would have shut the door again, but the girl cried imperiously: "Wait! Tell me if the young doctor is ill."

"The young doctor! Ha, the young doctor, is it?" returned the old woman with a toothless grin. "The young doctor is gone!" With which she was gone too.

The girl's heart gave a great thump, and then sank with a sickening thud as heavy as lead in her breast. It seemed to sink quite away from her and leave her without feeling. By some impulse she pushed the heavy door open again and went in. The living room was deserted.

From the back of the cottage came Lois' shrill treble. She was singing as she cooked her dinner of fish and eggs. In front of the girl was another door. She knew where it led, and, with a wild desire to be where he had lately been, she stole noiselessly to it, opened and entered it, shutting it behind her.

Then she stood in the little study that had been Percy St. John's her hands rigidly clasped, and her great eyes staring straight ahead of her. Then a long quivering sigh escaped her lips—a sigh of relief. There between the little windows stood his trunk; on the rough table were his books. He would come back! He was not gone for ever!

The revulsion of feeling that swept over her made her head swim. Her limbs shook; she fell upon her knees and buried her face in her hands, too happy to pray in words. Minutes passed while she knelt there. When she raised her head she looked, still kneeling, about the little room once more. It was barely furnished—scarcely comfortable, it would seem, to eyes accustomed to the luxuries of life; but to her it was holy. In its surroundings she felt the spell of his living presence.

Rising slowly, she crept to the table, and looked at the books scattered over it. One was left open; she had often found him studying it on the beach. She longed to touch it; she felt she must lay her head on it, and sob her heart out; but she could not. She turned suddenly away, and almost cried out in pain, as though she had been struck.

On a chair, before her, hung the heavy jacket he wore in the boat. It seemed an unresponsive part of himself that rose before her, and mocked her with its silent personality. She went to it and bent over it, passing her hands up and down its warm roughness, in lingering caress; she slipped her finger-tips into the loose pockets, where she had seen his shapely hands, that shamed her own in their whiteness, so often thrust.

In the button-hole still hung a faded flower; she had seen him put it there, whistling to himself, the last day they were together. The merry whistle rang out for her again.

She buried her face in her hands.

She threw her arm across the chair and pillowed her head upon it, crying miserably.

She was startled by footsteps in the outer room. Shuffling feet, in wooden shoes, approached the door behind her. There was no means of escape save through the open window of the little bedroom beyond. With a swift bound she reached it, grasped the sill with her hands, and, with one agile spring, was through it and on the ground beneath. Then she ran, ran, ran, until, with the tears still wet on her cheeks, she reached the boat, flung herself panting into it, and pushed out far from shore.

She did not return until the stars were reflected in the dark water. Then she crept home, tired out. She lingered in the living-room only long enough to hear them say the young doctor had spent the day at the neighbouring town, ten miles inland, and had returned late that evening to the village. Then she went silently to bed. She did not want to be questioned.

It was early the next morning, when the sun was shining gloriously, and she was stretched at full length on the sand, regardless of the fulness of its power, that Dr. St. John suddenly looked down at her and said, with his happy laugh:

"Well, little salamander, I have found you. What a run-away you are! I looked for you yesterday, to say *I* was going to run away for the day, but I couldn't find you anywhere."

She listened to him without stirring, and some new expression in her wide eyes puzzled him. Then she sat up, shaking her glossy braids free of the little sand particles. "Did you have a fine day?" she asked.

"Very. I enjoyed my new experiences; but not so much as my new home and the companionship of my little friend here." His tone was full of gentle courtesy. Its very friendliness hurt her. She sprang up.

"Did you come for a row?" she asked abruptly. He did not understand her strange, new mood. But she was a creature of moods; he did not question this one.

"No," he said kindly, "not now. I came to talk to you; I have something to show you. Won't you walk back to the cottage with me? It is there."

They went back together; he talking constantly, and she listening with pleased attention.

Old Lois was out, and the cottage was very quiet. He threw open the study door and stood back for her to enter, little dreaming with what agony she had so recently crossed its threshold. She was thinking of it, with a sudden swelling at her throat, when she stopped abruptly, her hands clasped together, and a long "Oh-h-h!" escaping her scarlet lips.

The small apartment was transformed. Table and chairs, and even the floor, were strewn with bright toys of all descriptions—quaint dolls and birds and animals, fishing-boats and fisher-folk in their native dress, long strings of rainbow-coloured shells, and half-a-dozen seagulls with outstretched wings and eyes as bright as they had been in life.

"Do you like them?" he asked at last, as she ventured a step nearer.

"Ah, beautiful!" she gasped, sinking in childlike abandon upon the floor beside them. "But what can you do with so many?"

"Can you not guess?" he questioned smiling. She shook her head.

"Why, they are for the hospital children—all but those which you like best. I want you to choose——"

"You are going away!" The words seemed wrung from the bitterness of her soul. He looked down suddenly into a white face, with piteous, upturned eyes.

"Poor child, poor little thing!" he said tenderly. "I must. I am much stronger, and my children need me. But, Maria——." He bent and laid a hand on her soft hair.

"You must not! You shall not!" she groaned.

St. John was in despair. He smoothed the thick braids soothingly. "Listen, Maria," he urged; "be sensible——"

"I cannot," she cried. "I will not. I love you—you shall not go away from me!" She raised herself on her knees and threw her strong young arms around him, holding him as though she would never let him go.

He did not speak for a moment, until her wild passion had

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spent itself in a frenzy of weeping. Then, with the tear-stained face hidden against his knees, he spoke to her again in a low voice that sounded strangely unlike his own. "My poor little misguided child!" he said, and the hand on her head trembled a little. "Listen, Maria! You *must* listen to me."

The masterfulness of his tone overcame her. She suffered him to unloose her arms and lead her to the armchair, in which he placed her. Then he sat down by her, and took the cold, quivering fingers within his own warm grasp.

"There has been a great mistake, Maria, and it is my fault." He paused an instant in pitying tenderness for the white, set face before him. She was making a mighty struggle to be calm.

"It is my fault," he said again; "I looked on you as a child, when you are a woman. I thought of you as a child, and you did not understand me——"

"I am growing fast—I will be quite grown up soon," she sobbed.

"Yes, you will be fully grown soon," he answered gently, "but you must never think of this again."

"Do you mean I must not love you?" she gasped.

"Yes, child; I mean that. You must not—you cannot——"

She threw herself downward on the table. "Why not?" she wailed. "I must—I must!"

He walked away from her the length of the narrow apartment and into the sleeping-room beyond. When he came back she lifted her head slowly, and he laid a tiny velvet case in her hand. It enshrined the fair face of a woman—a young woman, with a halo of bright curls above her brow and a joyous smile on her lips.

"This," he said reverently, "is my wife."

The girl gave him one wild, despairing look. Then she put the picture from her and got up.

"Let me go!" she said fiercely.

"Then you will not say good-bye to me? You will not let me tell you how sorry I am; you will not let me help you!"

She looked at him helplessly, with eyes the desolateness of whose misery wrung his heart.

As he took both her hands and pressed her into the chair once more, she did not comprehend how it was that all the spell of his old influence came over her and kept her there—kept her great eyes reading his face while he told her gently of the sweet-faced woman who, for a year, had been his own; how she missed him and longed for him with an intensity of love unutterable; how, if Maria would come down to them for a visit, his wife would welcome and love her and make her their own.

Soothed the fevered hand within her own.

She grew quite calm while he talked. Her heart seemed to have broken with that last great blow. She took her hands from him quietly enough.

"I must go now," she said wearily; "good-bye."

She got up and put out her hand to him again without looking at him. He took it in his own, and drawing from his watch chain a little cross, brilliant with rubies, laid it upon her soft palm.

"I want you to have this as a keepsake, Maria," he said. "I have always intended to give it to you when I went away. Won't you wear it and think of me often, and how I will remember you always and hope to see you soon again?"

She watched it glittering for a moment before she said simply, "Yes."

Then she turned to go, without a backward look.

"But this is not really good-bye, you know," he called after her. "I am not going until to-morrow morning, at five; I will see you again."

But the day grew to noon's splendour and evening's shadow, and the night came on unheeded by the girl who lay hidden in a crevice of the rock by the sea—lay with her face half-buried in the spray-kissed lichen, her hands convulsively clasping the little jewelled cross.

When morning came she lifted herself stiffly, and the wan light showed a face which bore the imprint of years of suffering. She had hoped to die in that long, silent night.

She sat shivering—that deadliest of all shivering that is not from cold—and saw the boat come near, and land. She heard her own name called long and shrilly from the beach. She could even see them as they stood in the early light, the group of faithful fisher folk assembled to see the young doctor safely on his journey.

She strained her eyes until the familiar figure came in sight and moved briskly among them, lingering, she knew, for a hearty handshake, a word of thanks, a kindly wish for each one. And she—she would never hear him, touch him, know him near her again! She shrieked aloud, but the remorseless wind beat the echo back upon her.

Once, as he approached the boat, he turned again; not towards the little crowd he was leaving, but in the direction of the tiny hut she called her home; he looked intently, paused, waved his hand, and disappeared. And all was darkness.

Ten years later, and still the long rows of cots in the Hospital of the Holy Innocents were full of patient child-sufferers. For patient the gentle innocents seemed ever to become.

But they were not the same children that had been there ten years before. Some of them had been sent back to happy homes and friends, cured; some had no homes awaiting them, had learned to look upon these rooms as home, and had stayed to nurse, with tender care and tender sympathy, long-sufferers such as they had been.

To these last the little invalids were never tired of turning for the restful tales they told of other children, who, in wretched pain, from which nothing but death could ever bring relief, learned to look forward bravely to that time, and even to welcome it. The beds of these were made in the sweet, old garden, flower-covered; where the little ones, in death as in life, grouped close around the spot where rested their benefactor, their father, their dearest friend and comforter, Dr. St. John.

There was one who never talked of this; who moved about serenely in her soft black gown; whose every touch was calm; whose face was peace itself. "Sister Maria!" the little voices called. And in the night she sought their beds of pain; and, sitting in the shadow, soothing the fevered hands within her own, she told strange, lovely stories of the far-off sea; a strong, bright girl, untouched by pain and care, who lived there once, and rowed her own brown boat, and knew the caverns where the seaweed grew; learnt how to tame the wild sea-birds, and where to find the rainbow-tinted shells that never ceased to murmur of their home. Daylight would come before they dreamed that the long night was gone. And with its cooling balm, soothed by the caressing of her tender voice, the child would fall asleep.

Then Sister Maria noiselessly flitted from bed to bed, drawing the curtains to keep out the growing light. When her last mission for the night was done, she always went to the old window that overlooked the garden, fell on her knees, and offered up her morning prayer to God. And at its close she lifted the rosary that hung ever to her side, and pressed its cross of rubies to her lips.

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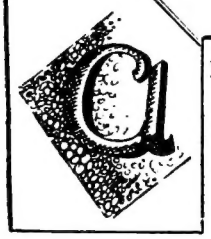
A SIMPLE MISTAKE



AFTER I had received a diploma from one of our venerable universities, I felt that I could not do better than to complete my education on the Continent. As I wished to perfect my already excellent knowledge of modern languages, I thought residence in some continental town would enable me to accomplish both purposes.

Whether I chose the University of Göttingen or Heidelberg, I do not care to state; and, if the ingenious reader can learn from internal evidence that I pursued my studies at neither of these great institutions of learning, let him not be surprised. I prefer not to indicate precisely the scene of the strange happening, about which I am going to tell, for reasons which will be readily understood by anyone who attentively peruses this story.

We were instructed principally by lectures. Some of us took notes, some drew caricatures, or scrawled verses upon the otherwise blank pages of our books; and only a very few became thoroughly imbued with the enthusiasm for learning which animated many of the learned men who expounded to us the accumulated wisdom of the ages, and propounded novel theories of their own.

While I was not equally interested in all of the lecturers, there were one or two of them who deeply impressed me—none more deeply than Herr Schwartz. He was a short, thick-set man, with tightly curling black hair and beard. His nationality I am not certain about, but I think he was a German or Austrian.

He lectured upon comparative anatomy and physiology, and was an advanced and uncompromising evolutionist. By advanced, I do not mean an evolutionist of these latter days—one of the men of science who admit or explain away so much that they state nothing definitely—but one of the old and imperfect disciples of Darwin.

Outside of his lecture hours Herr Schwartz was supposed to spend the greater part of his time in his laboratory—a large and mysterious building situated upon the outskirts of the town. Much curiosity existed among the students as to the nature of the researches he carried on in this gloomy building; but never, so far as we know, had any student been admitted within its windowless walls.

Great, then, was my surprise one morning when the learned lecturer was taking a long walk with me—a thing that he had done once or twice since he discovered my intense interest in his bold theories—to receive an invitation to come with him to inspect his laboratory. My astonishment must have been evident in my expression, for he said:

"Come! Is it so strange that I should ask a student to my laboratory?"

"Indeed, no," I answered, with some hesitation, "but I imagined——"

"Yes," he interrupted, "you thought because I had never thrown open my working room to the general rabble of students that there was some mystery about it—something I wished to conceal. Ah, no! You are different; you have a truly scientific mind. To the ordinary intellect what I am doing would seem but nonsense. Incapable of comprehending me, they would see in my experiments but the vagaries of a lunatic. But once I have shown you the plan, the reason, the theory upon which I work, you will see the logical basis for each wheel and each cog in the whole apparatus."

"I am proud, indeed, Herr Schwartz," I began, but he did not wait for the end of my sentence.

"There is no reason for pride," he said, waving his hand disdainfully. "You cannot help it. You judge all things without prejudice and upon their merits. Will you come?"

"Most willingly," I answered. "When shall my visit be made?"

"To-day," he said promptly.

"But it is your lecture day," I said, looking at my watch; "and, in fact, you will have no more time than is necessary, even if you should go now to the lecture-room."

"Bah!" he answered, with a curl of the lip. "What care I for the gaping of those boobies now? It is true I have spent two years in pelting their dough faces with the crumbs of science which not one of them can receive. But now all that is past. My apparatus is at last ready. To-day it will be put in operation."

"Will it not be better, then, for me to postpone my visit for another time?" I asked, not wishing to inconvenience the experimenter.

"You do not understand," said Herr Schwartz, turning to me with a smile. "I do not ask you to come into the place so long sacred to my deepest musings, my most important researches, merely as a spectator to be amused, nor as a student to be instructed. I need help. For a long time I have been upon the look-out among the young men in the university, hoping that when the day of final proof should come I might be able to secure just the right assistance. Well, I have found the man I sought; and you are he. I cannot perform the experiment, for which I have passed years in laborious preparation, without the aid of the right brain and the right hand."

By this time we had arrived at the top of a slight eminence from which the laboratory was distinctly visible. It was a large, square building, with a hemispherical roof—not unlike an astronomical observatory. As this strange, windowless structure came into view, Herr Schwartz halted, and turning his back upon it, solemnly addressed himself to me:

"Wait," he said. "It is not too late yet for you to withdraw. You have known me long enough to be sure I am of sound mind, and to know whether you can rely upon my good faith. I assure you that in the experiment I am about to make no harm can come to you. I alone will take all risks and be responsible for all the results. That is but right, since I alone shall reap whatever benefit may spring from the momentous trial. Speak, then, and let me know whether I have rightly concluded, that I can rely upon your nationality and your intellect. Are you willing to assist me in this purely scientific experiment?"

"Herr Schwartz," I replied, after a moment's reflection, "only assure me that you will call upon me to do nothing derogatory to my status as a man of science and a—a gentleman, and I will consent gladly to aid you in any way within my power."

"I give you my word, as an evolutionist and as a scholar, that you can safely assist me upon those conditions," said Herr Schwartz.

"Very well," I answered, "I consent."

"There is no time to be lost, then," he answered.

We set out for the laboratory, and after a few minutes stood before the heavy oak door. It was secured by a combination lock. Herr Schwartz gave the handle a few revolutions, the bolt flew back, and we entered the building, and, when the door was shut, found ourselves in perfect darkness.

In a moment, however, I heard a slight click, and the interior of the laboratory was flooded with the radiance of an enormous incandescent light.

I do not know how I can most clearly convey the impression

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made upon me by the wondrous sight which was revealed to me. Perhaps the plainest and simplest method is the best. I must trust for the rest to the imagination of my readers.

I saw that the enormous hemispherical dome that roofed the edifice had been raised to accommodate a model of the globe—a terrestrial globe. Its dimensions I cannot give; but perhaps it was one hundred feet in diameter. The electric light was so placed as to be a representation of the sun.

A large parabolic mirror seemed to take the place of our satellite the moon; more distant were other celestial bodies, while tiny lamps were grouped like constellations. In other words, I saw an orrery, but such an orrery as man had never before made.

"Go nearer," said Herr Schwartz, "and examine the machinery. It is purely artificial—I make no pretensions to the black art. But do not interfere with any of the mechanism; it is the result of months of careful adjustment."

I was speechless with admiration; for, as I came nearer, I saw that I was gazing on a dwarfed world. I said something of the sort, when I had recovered from my first stupefaction.

"Yes," said the maker of these marvels, "you have comprehended it. As the Chinese and Japanese dwarf trees, I have a dwarfed world. I have made some wonderful discoveries. I have replaced gravitation by electricity; have made an artificial solar body; have produced artificial temperatures, and, in short, have created a world in miniature; but a world that is, save for some few inferior forms of life, uninhabited.

"You see upon this tiny (for tiny it is compared to the world whereon we dwell)—upon this tiny world an ocean rolls, continents exist, vegetation flourishes, and the seasons pursue their wonted round. The animal life is restricted, for a purpose, to a few forms—to such as are necessary to sustain life in the human being. The purpose of this great invention—for modesty over such an achievement would be absurd—will soon be revealed to you."

"It is truly superhuman," I said. "It seems to move as I look upon it."

"It does," he answered proudly. "It is essentially a new world. But let us not waste time in boyish wonder. All this is not a toy, but a piece of scientific apparatus."

"But what purpose can it serve?" I asked, after a few moments of bewilderment.

"After years of investigation," said Herr Schwartz slowly, "I have learned the history of the development of man. I have slowly unravelled the links of the chain extending from man as he exists to-day to the mere potential nomad. You, too, have surveyed a part of that wondrous story literally wrung from the heart of the rocks."

"Yes," I said, hesitatingly; "but the—'missing link'?"

"I have several skeletons of the 'missing link,'" said Herr Schwartz. "That is the very least of my discoveries. My thoughts for years have not been busy with the past of evolution. My dreams—nay, reasonings—my inventions, and my discoveries have dealt with its future. But enough. The experiment will make all clear to you where words piled upon words fail to effect a beginning. A few short explanations and we will proceed to deeds; and you will see for yourself whatever now seems obscure. Sit down."

"Listen," said Herr Schwartz, "and, unless it be necessary, do not interrupt me. You have seen the apparatus. It only remains for you to know that I have discovered a method of reducing my own size to such dimensions as to fit me to dwell upon the miniature earth you have already examined. This method is simple, effective, and entirely harmless. But for the present I shall not reveal it. Suffice to say that I shall utilise this method, and shall then allow you to place me upon that globe, selecting that part of India which is the cradle of the human race.

"Previously I shall have taught you to control and operate the mechanism whereby the little world is actuated. Having placed me, then, in the proper spot, you will by gradual degrees increase the speed of the earth's rotation. The effect, as I know from some minor experiments upon inferior animals, will be to greatly—indeed immeasurably—increase the rapidity with which evolution operates.

"Meanwhile, the tiny being which I have become will devote himself with all his powers to develop all his higher and nobler attributes. The result, I am sure, will be the production of an unimagined type of man. I will become an individual, so highly evolutionised, so supremely developed, and that what I am now, compared to an ape, I will be then, compared to my former self."

"And then——" I began.

"Silence!——for a moment longer," said Herr Schwartz impressively. "I have not done. Then you must stop the revolutions. A bell will strike for a signal. Take, then, the portion of that earth's crust upon which you know me to be—in fact, you might take the whole of India, as it is but a light burden—and carry it into the open air. There you will see the result of this experiment. What it will be, I know almost beyond the possibility of error. But you shall not have the supreme happiness of that moment destroyed by anticipation."

It was now about noon, and we partook of a light luncheon. After the meal was finished, Herr Schwartz took me into the operating-room, and explained to me the use of the electric buttons, the regulators, the governors, the switches and brakes, the dials and indicators which set in motion and controlled the complicated and beautiful mechanism by which his whirling globe was operated.

Mechanical matters had never offered any puzzles to me, and in a short time he pronounced me capable of performing the *rôle* he had entrusted to me. Then we proceeded to another apartment. He entered a small cabinet, after supplying me with a powerful magnifier, and told me when I should hear the stroke of a tiny bell to enter the room and take from over an alcohol lamp a small retort.

"By examining with the glass," said Herr Schwartz, "you will see that I have become a mere atom of humanity, too small to be seen save by a powerful lens. Place the mouth of the retort over the spot in India, which you will find indicated by a metal pointer, and then retire to the operating-room and set the machinery in motion. The process ought not to take over a few hours, and may be much shorter."

"Good-bye," said the experimenter with a smile, "and remember, whatever happens, the results are mine alone."

With a hand-shake we parted, and Herr Schwartz entered the transforming cabinet.

I do not know how long I waited. My interest and curiosity were so intense that I was hardly aware, all through the experiment, of the time which elapsed.

The bell sounded. I entered the little cabinet, found the retort over the tiny lamp, found the result to be what Herr Schwartz had predicted. There was a microscopic image of the scientific friend to whose lectures I had so long listened.

Realising the responsibility which now rested upon me, I hastened to carry out Herr Schwartz's instructions to the letter. I placed the mite of humanity upon the artificial globe, returned to the operating-room, and set the wonderful apparatus (which had been at rest during the preceding preparations) again in motion.

Gradually I added to the speed of rotation, keeping my eyes upon the dials and indicators. My great anxiety was to keep the speed at just the points which Herr Schwartz had prescribed.

There is no need to dwell upon the anxious time that followed, nor to tell the thousand thoughts and fears that pressed upon my throbbing brain. After what seemed an endless time, the bell sounded the signal—I rushed to the main hall, tore the whole of India from its place, and made my way to the outer air.

It was still a moonlight night. I placed the bit of earth gently upon the ground, and from it there arose a figure! But what was it that slowly took shape before me! Was it the noble figure of a man, grown to some grander, nobler shape?

Alas! no.

On the contrary, it was a diminutive and far from attractive *monkey*.

I saw at once there was something wrong, and my trained scientific intellect at once solved the mystery. *I had turned the apparatus backward.*

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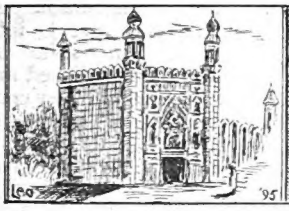
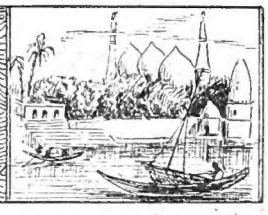


THE TENTH OF JUNE



By JOHN K. LEYS, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.—Illustrated by* RAYMOND POTTER.

SUMMARY.

GEOFFREY DUNDAS, whose life is attempted on the 10th of June, 1883, by a Hindoo barrister at the Law Courts, by means of poison, visits General Sir Arthur Chetwynd at Seacombe Towers, in May, 1884. The General explains that a serious danger threatens the household, and that it will come, if at all, on the tenth of June. The reason for this is that during the Indian Mutiny on this day, in 1853, Sir Arthur, together with Geoffrey's father (since dead) took part in the looting of a Hindoo temple, and every Tenth of June afterwards one of the Englishmen concerned or some member of their families is assassinated. It appears that the Rajah of Nagore is now coming to pay a visit to Sir Arthur.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RAJAH.

THERE was, of course, some excitement at Seacombe Towers, as the day fixed for the arrival of the Rajah drew near. The Stoddart girls had practised themselves in private in the art of saying "Your Highness" in a natural and off-hand manner. Leila was not free from the curiosity commonly ascribed to her sex. Sir Arthur and Geoffrey Dundas had very good reason for looking forward to the visit with unusual interest. Only Captain Byngham was, or affected to be, indifferent. He felt inclined to resent a guest of superior rank to himself being brought into the house.

"After all, the man's only a nigger," he remarked to Leila; "I don't see the necessity for all this fuss."

On the evening of the last day of May the expected guest arrived.

He travelled with his secretary and two servants, for whom separate accommodation had been provided in the house.

Sir Arthur, with his family and guests, were in the drawing-room ready to receive him; and when the butler announced in a loud voice—"His 'Ighness the Rajah of Nagore!" every one in the room rose up.

The next moment they all felt that a person of distinction had entered the room. Amavati Sastri—so the Rajah was named—came in without the least pretentiousness or awkwardness, and, singling out Miss Chetwynd instinctively from the other ladies, he advanced and bowed gravely to her in perfect silence. Having saluted the mistress of the house, he turned to Sir Arthur and held out his hand.

There was a dignity, a self-possession, in the Oriental's demeanour which, apart from his rank, compelled respect; and there was also a quiet gracefulness in his every movement which was extremely charming. For the moment Sir Arthur forgot his fears, his suspicions, and only desired to do the honours of his house worthily to so distinguished a guest.

Each one in turn was presented to the Rajah, who shook hands with each; but he performed the ceremony in such a way that one could see that it was to him a formal act of courtesy with which he was not familiar.

"Have you been long in this country, Rajah?" asked Leila, when the party were seated.

"Only a week—ten days," said Amavati in pure, musical English.

"I thought," broke in Captain Byngham, "that people of your religion lost caste when they crossed the sea."

Leila watched the Oriental turn his fine dark eyes on the speaker; and she thought she could detect a faint flush under his dusky skin, as he replied, without a trace of resentment in his voice:

"It is enough that I have come."

"His 'Ighness the Rajah of Nagore."

"I hope your highness had a fair passage," said Geoffrey hastily.

"Very fair, I thank you," was the reply, accompanied by a grave smile.

"And I hope you intend to stay some time in England," said Sir Arthur heartily.

"My arrangements are not yet fixed."

"At all events I hope you intend giving us all the time you can," said Leila.

For the first time a look of animation, of pleasure, came into the Rajah's face.

"It is gracious of you to say so, madam," he said quietly.

Shortly afterwards the dressing-bell rang, and a footman appeared to conduct the Rajah to his room, whither one of the Hindoo servants had preceded him. The other was busy over the fire in a small room which had been given him to use as a kitchen.

"I like him!" exclaimed Leila, when the door had closed behind Amavati. "I like his quiet dignified ways—so different from the vulgar familiarity of our English manners."

Sir Arthur said nothing, but smiled grimly. Captain Byngham's lip curled in contempt.

"I confess he impressed me very favourably," said Geoffrey.

"Why should you say 'I confess'?" demanded Leila, "It almost sounds as if you had made up your mind to dislike him."

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Crossing one of the glades in the park.

"Come, Miss Stoddart," cried the General in a purposely loud tone, "you have not yet given us your opinion of our illustrious visitor."

"I agree with Leila," said Emily with some decision of manner. "I think the Rajah is delightful; and as for his skin being darker than ours, I don't think it is Christian-like to think less of him on that account."

"Why, the man is an idolator, a pagan!" exclaimed the Captain.

"He was brought up in that way," said the young lady serenely, as she made her way to the door; "and I daresay some pagans are better, all things considered, than some Christians."

Of course, the presence of the Rajah and his secretary made a considerable difference in the ordinary life of the house; but the General's Hindoo guest made no demand on the time of his host and hostess. He took great pleasure in wandering about the garden and the park. If the General, or Leila, or one of the Stoddart girls, chose to bear him company, he was sure to repay the attention by some graceful compliment; but he seemed to be quite content to go about by himself. Of course, he took no part in the common amusements of the season—boating, riding, and tennis-playing. Probably in his secret soul he thought of those who joined in them very much what we should think of grown men who played leap-frog or rounders. But he was a great deal out of doors.

At any hour, from dawn to midnight, except the sacred hour of dinner, the tall, spare form of the Hindoo prince might be seen crossing one of the glades in the park, or gliding from one clump of laurels to another, followed very often, at a little distance, by the short rotund figure of Ajeer Chunder Sen, his secretary.

As a rule, Chunder Sen, when not in attendance on his master, was to be found in the library; but he was fond of pacing up and down one of the alleys in the garden, and there Dundas often joined him for a chat. He was much more communicative than the Rajah, and Geoffrey found him an interesting companion. He was never weary of extolling the power and greatness of England; and he often declared that the conquest of his native land by British soldiers was the best thing that could possibly have happened to it. This was, in a sense, gratifying to Geoffrey's feelings as an Englishman; yet there seemed to be too much of Uriah Heep's manner about the avowal. A licking often does a man good; but you would not give much for the man who would acknowledge the fact in so many words.

Geoffrey soon perceived that Chunder Sen was a man of high education, and considerable mental powers, and that he had great influence with the Rajah. But, in spite of his cleverness, his smooth and polished manner, and his readiness to please, Geoffrey could not bring himself to like the Rajah's secretary.

With the Rajah himself it was different. The young Englishman felt that Amavati was a prince by nature as well as in rank. But he had been only a short time in the house when Geoffrey made a discovery that made him look on the Rajah with anything but friendly feelings. He became convinced that Amavati had fallen in love with Leila. Every now and then the Hindoo's large dark eyes would wander to the place where Leila sat—and rest there. She was his loadstar: as often as the usages of Society permitted he would steal to her side.

Geoffrey, looking on, was at first inclined to think that the idea of Leila Chetwynd listening to the Rajah's suit was utterly preposterous and absurd. But after a short time he began to ask himself whether this was quite so certain—whether the Rajah might not be a much more dangerous rival than Captain Byngham.

There was a charm about his personality, depth in his great, melancholy eyes, a tenderness in the liquid tones of his voice, which to a romantic girl—such as Leila certainly was—might be very attractive. It could not be said that intellectually and socially he was not Leila's equal; among his own countrymen he would, of course, be considered vastly her superior.

It was impossible to gather anything from the girl's manner. She was invariably gentle and pleasant with the Rajah; but she never allowed her voice to sink even by a semitone when she conversed with him.

There was one other of the General's guests who watched the pair with much interest, and this was Emily Stoddart. She had espoused the Rajah's cause from the first; and more than once she had teased Captain Byngham and Geoffrey into something like anger by predicting a match between the Rajah and Leila, and protesting that she saw nothing objectionable in the idea of such a marriage.

"It's my idea," growled Byngham after one of Miss Emily's outbursts, "that that young lady wouldn't greatly object to marrying the melancholy nigger

She was his loadstar.

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"What! Ask my daughter!"

herself." And for once Geoffrey felt inclined to agree with his rival.

But the question of the Rajah's admiration for the daughter of his host soon passed beyond the region of mere conjecture.

One afternoon, the afternoon of Tuesday, the 6th of June, as the General and his guest were smoking under a tree on the lawn after lunch, the conversation happened to turn upon the dignity of the ancient races of India; and Sir Arthur, partly from conviction, partly from a desire to please his guest, was drawing a comparison between Eastern races and Europeans, not greatly to the advantage of the latter, when the Rajah suddenly interrupted him.

"Do you believe, then, that all the races which belong to what your scholars call the 'Indo-Germanic family,' are on a certain equality."

"Yes, I think so."

Outwardly the Hindoo was unmoved; but some seconds elapsed before he put his next question.

"Members of these races might, then, intermarry without either party suffering any loss of dignity?"

"Yes—under certain circumstances."

"Would it, then, be displeasing to you if I were to ask your daughter to become the Ranee of Nagore?"

The General started as if he had been shot.

"What! Ask my daughter!" he exclaimed. Like many another man, Sir Arthur entertained some liberal theories; but resented any attempt to apply them to himself or his family. His surprise was so great that he needed time to recover himself; and thus he was able to remember that he had no excuse for being indignant. His own words were fresh in his memory. He remained silent for what seemed a long time, and then said coldly:—

"You honour me, Rajah, by this proposal. Your rank is sufficient to justify it; and I have never heard anything but good of your private life. But this is one of those matters in which a father must be allowed to judge for himself what is best for his child's welfare and happiness. With every respect for you, I beg leave to decline your proposal."

As he uttered these last words the General unconsciously rose to his feet. The Rajah followed his example, bowed, and turned sadly away.

The General followed him.

"May I ask, Rajah, whether you have given my daughter any intimation of your feeling towards her?"

"No, beyond the small tributes of respect which you have witnessed."

"Then let me beg that what you have just now said to me may be forgotten. Let it make no difference between our relations in any way."

The Rajah quite understood that Sir Arthur meant to beg him not to shorten his stay on account of what had passed, but had too much delicacy to refer to the subject directly.

He bowed politely, yet with some haughtiness of demeanour, and answered—

"I accept your goodness, Sir Arthur, on one condition—I have not yet abandoned all hope of overcoming your—your dislike——"

"No, no; not dislike!" cried the General.

"Your disinclination, then, to think of me as your son-in-law. I still hope to win your daughter's hand. May I come back in one year's time? This time next year——"

Again the General started—started in so marked a way that the Rajah instinctively stopped and looked at him.

He had absolutely forgotten the approaching Tenth of June!

In his anxiety not to appear inhospitable he had deliberately thrown away the chance of getting rid of his Hindoo guests before the fatal day. And now the Rajah was actually proposing that he should come back at the same time twelve months hence! There was little wonder that the General threw a quick, suspicious glance at his guest. The Hindoo bore it without changing a muscle.

"What a fool I am!" was Sir Arthur's next thought. "If he wants to marry Leila he cannot be plotting her death, or mine."

"Do you forbid me to come again in a year's time?" said Amavati, with quiet dignity.

"No," answered the General, in some confusion. "No; I'm sure it's of no use, you know. It can't be of any use. But if you wish it, I should not think of forbidding your coming."

"I thank you," said Amavati. "I have already laid my plans for a journey in America. I shall return to this country in the end of May next year. Till then, we will, as you say, forget what has passed between us."

With these words the Oriental again saluted his host, and walked into the house.

CHAPTER V.

SUSPICIONS.

THAT evening the General and Geoffrey Dundas happened to meet in the drawing-room before the others obeyed the dinner-bell.

"Geoffrey," said Sir Arthur, going close up to him, "my apprehensions about the Rajah have been greatly diminished—in fact, I may say, they have disappeared. I think you ought to know, since you, and you alone, have shared my anxiety. The truth is, that this afternoon Amavati made a most extraordinary proposal to me. He wants to make Leila Ranee of Nagore."

Geoffrey suddenly turned pale.

"And you said to him——?"

"Oh, I said it wouldn't do at all. I refused him flatly. But the point is this—feeling as he does towards my daughter, he cannot be a party to any scheme to injure, much less to murder us."

"True," said Geoffrey, whose face had brightened wonderfully at the words "I refused him flatly." "True, sir; and I may say that since I have known the Rajah, I have been unable to believe——"

"Hush! not another word. Here are the girls."

After what he had heard, Geoffrey was not surprised that when coffee had been served, and the three girls had gone out on the terrace as usual, the Rajah did not follow them, though Captain Byngham did, but remained at the dinner-table with the General and himself. But not a sign of what he felt appeared on the Hindoo's delicate features.

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On account of the good news—for to him it was the best of good news—that he had just heard, Geoffrey had been in better spirits than usual, and had made an uncommonly good dinner. He felt well-disposed towards all men, and especially towards his defeated rival, as the Rajah certainly was. He entertained for his highness much the same sort of feeling that a steeplechaser has for a competitor who, after riding pluckily and dangerously well, has come to grief in a ditch.

He leant across the table and chatted to the Rajah, his friendly feeling being increased as he noticed the manly courage with which the Hindoo concealed his pain.

When the General sauntered out to smoke a cigar, the two young men did not feel inclined to move, and Geoffrey carried his glass to the other side of the table and seated himself beside Amavati.

"This must be a very different scene from the kind of landscape you have in India," he observed as the Rajah gazed silently over the wooded park that stretched before the windows.

"Yes, very different—and more beautiful."

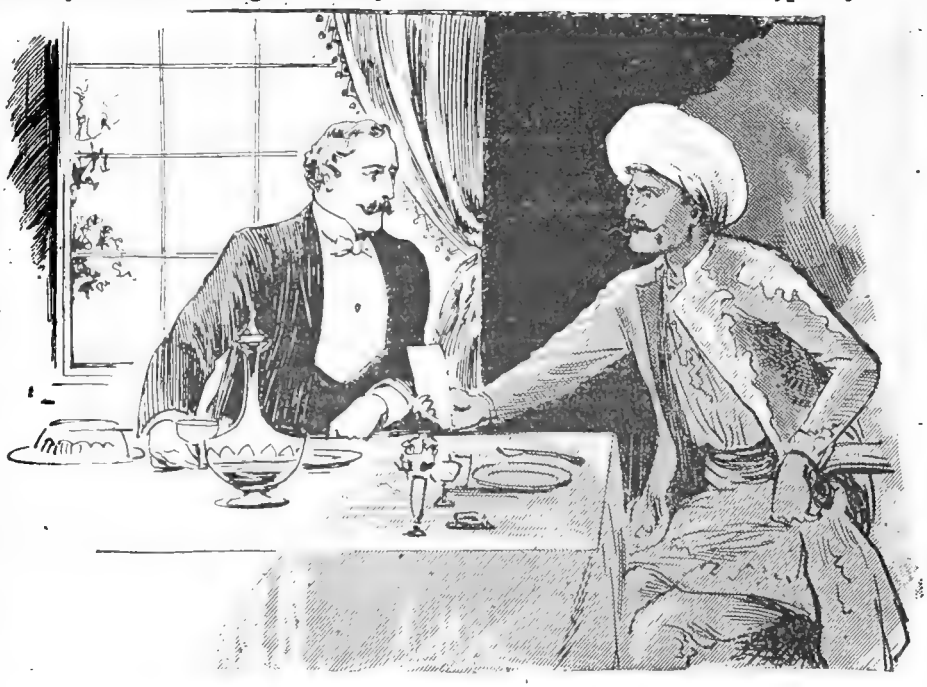
"Ah! But you have yet to see an English country landscape in winter," said Geoffrey with a laugh.

"Is it more beautiful than this?"

"Hardly. I meant that an English country landscape in winter is the dreariest scene conceivable—though I admit that when the snow is on the ground it has a beauty of its own. But I forgot. You have never seen snow, perhaps?"

"Never."

"And I suppose that no matter how you may try to imagine what you have never seen, the reality will always seem very different from the scene you had pictured to yourself."



The hand that held the sheet of paper twitched involuntarily.

"I have always found it so. Life in England is in many ways quite different from what I had fancied it would be, although I had often seen Englishmen, of course, in India. You are different from what they call Anglo-Indians?"

"In what way?"

"You are less proud and stiff, less overbearing, altogether more agreeable at home than your countrymen are in India."

"I can understand your saying that. But it is only natural. You yourself, Rajah, are a very different kind of personage from what I had anticipated." Here Geoffrey helped himself to another glass of port. "Do you know," he continued, "we entertained rather a strange suspicion concerning you before we saw you?"

"Indeed! May I ask what it was?"

The young Englishman did not answer immediately. He had suddenly recollected himself, and was dismayed at the folly he had been guilty of.

"I see you would rather not answer—pardon me for putting the question," said the Rajah. His voice was calm; but his tone was that of a man who has been ill-used, and is too proud to make any complaint. An answer of some sort Geoffrey felt he must make; and, on the whole, judging on the spur of the moment, he thought it better to tell the Rajah what had happened to himself. But he resolved that, for the present at all events, he would keep the General's name out of his narrative.

He laughed rather uneasily, and moved one of the decanters out of his way before speaking,

"Not at all, Rajah," he said. "On the contrary I feel that I ought to beg *your* pardon for entertaining such absurd suspicions about you as I confess I had in my mind before I saw you."

The Rajah was now listening with the keenest attention; and, indeed, Geoffrey's awkward, embarrassed manner—the manner of a man who finds himself in a false position, and is too honest to get out of it by means of a falsehood—was enough to excite his curiosity.

"One day last year, the tenth of this month in point of fact, I was very nearly poisoned. An unfortunate girl, who, as I believe, drank the wine I had in my glass, did actually die. There was some ground for suspecting that the poisoning was not accidental, and that the guilty person was a countryman of yours. I say I had a suspicion that it was so, but a letter was delivered next day at my chambers which put the matter beyond a doubt. It referred to a 'vendetta,' a scheme of vengeance on the part of some Hindoos, and intimated that I was one of the victims. Clearly I had been poisoned by a Hindoo barrister who had an excellent opportunity for dropping poison into my glass."

Geoffrey had been watching his companion's face closely. He detected no sign in it beyond this, that Amavati's eyes seemed to have a wider, fuller look than they had before.

"Have you still this letter?" asked the Rajah, in his usual calm manner.

"I have it still. Would you like to see it?"

"If you have no objection to show it to me."

"Not the least in the world. I'll fetch it," said Geoffrey, and tossing off the remainder of his glass of wine, he left the room. In less than five minutes he returned with the letter in his hand.

The Rajah took it; and when his eyes rested on the writing, the hand that held the sheet of paper twitched involuntarily. The sign was so slight that Geoffrey never noticed it.

"Of course, it is possible," said Geoffrey, "that the letter may be a hoax, the work of some friend at the bar with more leisure than sense. But I certainly was ill; and then there is the death of the poor girl. *That* was no hoax."

"I should not advise you to treat it as a hoax," said Amavati slowly, keeping his eyes fixed all the time on the few lines of writing before him.

"But I can do nothing to help myself. I cannot guard myself against a foe who may be lying in wait behind any corner."

"And you believed that I had to do with this outrage?" said the Rajah with a smile.

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"No," said Geoffrey, "for when I had that suspicion in my mind I did not know you. It was only because you belonged to the same race; and then the coincidence of the date was remarkable."

"The coincidence! I fear I do not understand."

"Yes," said Dundas, speaking slowly, lest he should unwittingly say more than he intended. "You see, the attempt on my life was made on the tenth of June. I have since ascertained that the affair which gave rise to this long-standing passion of revenge happened many years ago on the tenth of June. So that, when I heard that Hindoos were to be guests in the house in which I proposed to be staying on that very day in the following year"—again the Rajah gave a slight start, so slight that his companion did not observe it—"well, the coincidence struck me as odd."

"Don't you think it possible that a mistake was made—that you were taken for some other person?"

Geoffrey shook his head.

"Why?"

"Because my father was a soldier in India. He was concerned in the fight, or massacre, which happened on the tenth of June. And——" here Geoffrey's voice unconsciously sank, "and he fell on the tenth of June."

The Rajah remained perfectly motionless, still holding the letter in his hand.

"Will you allow me to keep this for a few hours?" he asked.

Geoffrey stared at him in surprise.

"Why?" he asked bluntly.

"I wish to study it."

This answer did not convey much meaning, but Geoffrey felt that he had no good reason for refusing, and answered, "Oh, if you like; but please take care of it; I should like to keep it as a curiosity. Shall we go out and smoke a cigar now? It will be quite dark in half-an-hour."

* * * *

About eleven o'clock that night Geoffrey was roused by a soft tap at his door.

In an instant he was wide awake, but he paused for a moment before answering. He knew that his bedroom door was unlocked, and he thought of remaining silent in order to see whether his visitor, who would suppose him to be asleep, would enter the room. But the next moment he had rejected the idea, and called out:

"Who's there? Come in."

There was no reply, and in an instant Geoffrey had sprung out of bed, and had opened the door himself.

"Who knocked at my door?" he called out.

Geoffrey had sprung out of bed.

"It was I," said a soft voice near him.

"The Rajah?"

"Yes."

"Just wait a minute, till I get a light."

"I need not trouble you to-night. It will do in the morning. I only came because I thought you would not be in bed."

But Geoffrey was curious to know what the Hindoo could have to say to him. He begged Amavati again to wait a moment, lit a candle, got into bed, and then called to the Rajah to come in.

He sprang to his feet.

Amavati came in, and softly closed the door behind him. He then sat down on a chair that stood near the bed.

"I wished to return your letter as soon as possible," he began, laying the paper on the coverlet.

Geoffrey took it and put it under his pillow.

"I suppose you have not discovered who the writer is?" he asked carelessly.

"I have been able to form a guess concerning it; but I am afraid I can say no more upon that point. It is, after all, only a guess. What I wanted chiefly to say to you, however, is this, do not despise the warning that your good fortune has given you. I think it is a real danger that besets you."

Geoffrey was startled by the Rajah's grave tone as much as by his words.

"You have been attacked once," continued the Rajah; "you may be attacked again."

"But what can I do to ward off the danger? How can I defend myself?"

"Your safety lies in flight. I should certainly advise you to leave England at once. Go secretly to some foreign country, and remain there till the eleventh of this month. Then, even if your fears are well founded—and I admit that I think they are—you may consider yourself safe for another year. Or you might shut yourself up in your house until the day is past, and admit no one. I see you are armed."

The Hindoo's glance rested on the General's revolver, which lay on the dressing-table at some little distance. Geoffrey could hardly understand how he had noticed the weapon, for to all appearance the Rajah's gaze had been fixed on him since he entered the room.

"That revolver belongs to the General," said Geoffrey. "But do you mean that I must hide myself, or shut myself up every year on the tenth of June?"

"That is what I advise you, and beg you to do," said Amavati. "I believe you cannot otherwise be safe."

"How do you know?" asked Geoffrey abruptly.

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The Hindoo paused a moment before answering. Geoffrey felt convinced that he was carefully preparing his reply.

"I am only giving you the advice that any cautious, any prudent man, who knew the character of my countrymen as I know it, would give you. If you doubt me, ask your friend Sir Arthur."

"The General! Is *he* in danger?"

"*He?* No! Why should he be in danger?"

"Because ——."

He stopped; then being unable to see how it could possibly injure Sir Arthur to say what he had in his mind, he went on:

"Because the General has the same reason to fear the tenth of June that I have. And so has Miss Chetwynd. I beseech you, Rajah, if you have any influence, if you can help us to lay hands on those murdering wretches, do so!"

For the first time since the interview began, for the first time since he came to the house, the Rajah showed genuine emotion. He sprang to his feet, and looked at the Englishman with something like horror in his eyes.

"No, no! It cannot be!" he exclaimed.

"It is so, I assure you. There is no doubt of it. Will you help us?"

"Is anyone there?"

"I cannot. I can do very little—nothing out of my own dominions. But what I can do, I will. I will consider what can be done. But you may be mistaken; I trust you are. Meantime, take my advice, and secure your own safety. You have plenty of time to hide yourself. I beseech you not to delay. Now I must go. Good-night."

And before Geoffrey had time to form a reply, the Rajah had gone.

Geoffrey locked the door and blew out the light; but to sleep was impossible. His mind refused to turn from the conversation that had just ended. He could not rid himself of the conviction that the Hindoo knew more than he had admitted he knew. But the main point was—Could he trust him? Ought he to secure his own safety by flight, or stay by the General and Leila? True, the Rajah seemed to think that they were in no danger, but he might be mistaken. Or, the Rajah's advice might be a ruse to get him out of the way.

The loneliness and perplexity were intolerable. After lying awake for an hour, Geoffrey was seized with the desire of seeing the General and talking over the difficulty with him. Quietly getting out of bed he threw on his dressing-gown, opened his bedroom door, and stepped out into the passage. All was quiet; all was in darkness.

On his way to Sir Arthur's room, which, like his own, was on the first floor, he paused a moment at the head of the stairs, and stopped, listening, for he fancied his ear had detected a slight sound in the library. So sure did he feel that he had heard something that he glided softly downstairs to see if anyone was there. In crossing the hall, however, his foot struck against a chair, which moved, giving out a loud grating sound against the tiles with which the hall was paved.

Opening the library door Geoffrey found the room in total darkness.

"Is anyone there?" he called out.

There was no answer.

He moved cautiously to the windows and examined them. They were both securely fastened.

"I must have been mistaken," he said to himself, "or perhaps there is a mouse behind the skirting-board. I am getting nervous and foolish. I had better get back to bed. To-morrow will be time enough to talk to the General. Why should I disturb his night's rest?"

He went back to his room, and once more tried to sleep; but sleep would not come. Perplexed thoughts, vague fears, and gloomy forebodings kept him awake till dawn.

(To be continued.)

HONOUR AVENGED

It was at the club, and we were all young fellows, gathered around the white-haired old Colonel who had found a refuge in Marseilles from his debts and his tyrant of a wife and the new customs that were pouring into Paris. More than any other man I ever knew, he had, what we call the grand air, a certain condescension to those he regarded as his inferiors, a sweetness and a simplicity of manner that those whom he liked found it impossible to resist. He belonged to the old *régime*, and the elder members of the club ill brooked his bitter tongue and sarcastic comment, but we lads of twenty-five and less hung upon his words, and would have liked to model ourselves on his pattern.

Fortunately that was impossible—heredity, early association, education, had all formed the Colonel.

"Ah, well"—he began, "for the story of revenge that I promised to tell you. It was in the year 1836 that old Detrouville died a ruined man, and to the amazement of us all old Baré married his daughter. I call him 'old Baré' because he was a grave and taciturn man, whose silent though courteous intercourse with his neighbours gradually won him that appellation while he was still young.

"Time did not tend to improve it when it gave him iron-grey hair and bent shoulders, although other men older by several years, still considered themselves gay gallants. But on one opinion all of us were unanimous: Jean Baré was a man of strictest honour, and the warmest though the most undemonstrative of friends.

"He was fifty when he astonished the world by his marriage with Blanche Detrouville. She was about twenty, a fair-haired little creature with the most innocent of blue eyes. Le Bon Dieu never made any woman as innocent as Blanche Detrouville looked. How it happened that she fascinated old Baré is a mystery—but fascinate him she did.

"He fell desperately, passionately in love with her—as one of you young blades would fall in love, and he married her, and took her out of the howling nest of her father's creditors, whose mouths he stopped with a *bonne bouche*. He set her up in his great mansion at Nouvre and loaded her with fine furniture, fine dresses, jewels, gew-gaws—what will not a man give for love?

"Old Baré had had a charge, a near neighbour, one Phillipe Doucet. This Phillipe had been old Baré's ward, and he turned over to him when he came of age a decent property. A fine fellow was Doucet: dark, slender, handsome, gentle, brave, a tremendous favourite with the women and many men.

"With all the men, in fact, except those with whom he had money dealings. They found him—to their infinite surprise,

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for he was courtesy itself—singularly hard to bargain with. He was gracious, complaisant, but as hard as a granite wall when it came to real concessions.

"But perhaps only old Baré knew the extent of his avarice; he who had seen it when Doucet was a little dark-eyed boy cherishing his belongings with the passion of a miser when he was hardly out of the cradle, and throughout his well-regulated studious youth saving, twisting, and turning to keep his allowance untouched from quarter to quarter, and happy only when he could return a goodly portion to his guardian for re-investment next year.

"Blanche Baré née Detrouville, as I have already said, was treated by her husband as if she were a queen, an Eastern queen, at whose feet he poured jewels, gold and precious stuffs. And she loved them with a passionate love.

"For several years his gifts so utterly filled her heart that she was entirely happy as old Baré's wife. For all his taciturnity the man must have discovered the secret of her content, for he continued to heap them upon her, and in return she gave him smiles and her little cheek to kiss, and perhaps a more tender embrace when something she had coveted cost a sum great enough to demand this exceptional concession.

"But the empty fool could not continue to let her trinkets and her stuffs fill her heart and mind to the exclusion of less dangerous idols. She began to crave flattery, excitement, homage, all of which she might have had from the silent, throbbing heart that was lawfully hers. Phillipe Doucet, the dark, handsome ward, soon supplied it. It was easy for him to ride over to Nouvre and spend the summer days, especially when old Baré had gone on his monthly visit to Paris.

"There were uninterrupted *téte-à-têtes* in the long, cool salon, sweet with roses and jasmine gathered in the terraced garden on which it looked; there were strolls in this garden at night-fall when these dreamy odours ladened the air, and the nightingale sang in the orange groves, and the moon waxed pale.

"Old Baré was a loyal friend, and his friendship was returned with equal fidelity. As it has happened before, the Bon Dieu gave the task to that friend who loved to break his heart.

"It was said in as few words as possible, but it was said. Instead of staying a week in Paris at his next visit he must return unexpectedly to his wife, in two days. No one but the friend was to know the change of plan.

"Old Baré did not look at his wife when he told her that evening he must leave on the morrow for the city. He did not touch her or address her except to make the statement, and when she gaily asked whether it was to be for a week, he simply bowed, but she was used to few words from him. Perhaps that was a fault—the authors of your recent novels make a silent husband an excuse for the severing of all wedded ties—but I do not believe had he been a Cicero of eloquence it would have made her different. She wanted first luxuries, then forbidden fruit.

"It was in the early morning of the third day that old Baré returned. The birds were singing in the garden; all the air was heavy with the perfume the dew extracted from the flowers. It was a fair mansion; he had guarded his jewel well, if beautiful things and tender care for her caprices were good guardians. He entered; down the winding stair with their shallow mahogany steps a man was coming. He started back repressing a cry.

"'Good day, sir,' said the master. 'You are welcome; I am glad to see you. Come with me to the dining-room.'

"Could he trust his ears? Phillipe was no coward, and he had prepared himself in that fleeting instant, when their eyes met, for the worst, which was, of course, a challenge.

"'The man is mad,' he thought, 'crazed by the blow.' Did he regret it? He was a tender-hearted, fair-speeched man. We are forbidden to judge.

"Old Baré drew nearer. 'You will come with me, and we will have our coffee?'

"There was something in old Baré's eye that commanded Doucet as he had never before been commanded. He obeyed.

"Baré rang for coffee. 'And say to your mistress that I particularly desire her presence,' he ordered the wondering servant.

"With that he led the way into the dining-room.

"'But, sir,' said Tontine, Madame's maid, coming into the room breathless. 'Madame could not at once obey Monsieur's summons. She sleeps; she is not half awakened. It will be necessary to make her toilet.'

"'Say to Madame, with my respectful compliments, it is necessary that she should come, and come at once.'

"The power in the man's eyes subjugated the woman as it had subjugated Doucet. She returned to her mistress, who appeared almost immediately after. It is evident to you, of course, that she had been listening at the keyhole.

"Old Baré bowed over her hand, and led her to her place.

"'You will make coffee for us, will you not, my dear? And drink it, and eat at least a few little cakes, of which you are so fond.'

"But she was not hungry! How troublesome! She must eat, whether she was hungry or not.

"You have the picture. The early, dew-laden morning; the woman robed, with hair awry, unkempt, a sorry sort of spectacle for a lover's eyes, especially as he must pay so dearly for it; the sun shining mercilessly on her pale, frightened face, and she sitting at the head of the table, serving viands to the husband opposite her, who, carefully dressed, cool, collected, was playing elaborately the part of host; while at the place of honour—her right hand—was her lover, with burning cheeks and downcast eyes, bewildered, confused, and cursing his strange place.

"Old Baré talked almost uninterruptedly, telling stories and making merry over the escapades—if so they might be called—of Phillipe's youth. Then when the weary meal had dragged itself far beyond its accustomed length he arose, and, with extraordinary civility, invited them into his own library, a room his wife seldom if ever visited.

"The cringing, trembling creature obeyed his first words, though Phillipe hung back, but there was something in the look of old Baré which compelled him to follow her, and with much cordiality, but quite an air of ceremony, old Baré ushered them into the dark, richly-furnished room with its books, and desks, and severely business-like air which betrayed the character of the master of this house.

"He then seated himself at his desk, opened his bank-book and wrote a cheque. Rising, he handed it to Phillipe.

"'I will trouble you to sign,' he said with an unfamiliar amiability. Half dazed at the whole proceedings Doucet read the words inscribed on the slip of paper, 'The National Bank of Paris will pay to the order of Blanche Detrouville Baré £10,000.'

"'I refuse, I utterly refuse to sign,' cried Phillipe, in an agony. 'Sir, I am at your service at any day, any hour you please. As the challenged party you may choose the weapons, but I will not sign the cheque.'

"Old Baré walked up to him and laid his hand on his arm. The look, sweetly smiling, transfixed him.

"'It is my whole fortune,' cried Doucet; 'the savings, the accumulation of years.' The miser had entered the soul of the gallant and driven out courage and self-respect; he who would have gone gaily to the field of honour was broken like a whipcord at the prospect of resigning his gold and his silver. Ah, well did his former guardian know his man and where his treasure lay, and his heart also.

"'Nay, if you will pardon a contradiction, not your whole fortune, but your pinchings and savings and extortions from the poor. It will not ruin you, monsieur, this £10,000; it will simply break your heart.'

"He did not take his eyes from the white, convulsed face. Something in them drew the man to the table, he signed, and then he turned towards the crushed, trembling creature who stood between them, understanding nothing except that she whom the winds of heaven had not visited too roughly, she who had known only petting, caressing words, respectful admiration, silent though consuming love, was suddenly alone in the world, stripped, despoiled, despised.

"The man who had robbed her of all she held dear looked

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at her. His mask of courtesy, knighthood, impassioned romance had fallen from him. He was haggard and old with suffering—although it had only been five or ten short minutes since he had heard his doom. He looked as he would look fifty years after, a greedy miser, his fingers clutching at his gold, his gold!

"She swayed her body to and fro. 'Phillipe!' she cried, in an agonised voice; she could not bear his look of consuming hate. 'May evil come to you!' he said, and he shook his fist in her face. Then suddenly he seemed to bethink himself. 'I will go,' he muttered, and stumbled out of the room.

"Old Baré looked at him, then a light broke. 'It is unfortunate that Monsieur walked from his house to ours, for it is a hot morning,' he murmured, in his strange, new, courteous voice. 'Jules,' as a servant answered the bell; 'a fresh horse at once.'

"Then he addressed the creature he had cherished. 'Since what has been mine has been yours,' he said, 'luckily we have the power to sign each other's names. I always arranged it. I never wished you to feel any difference between yours and mine.' His voice did not break, though, perhaps, the tender care he had given her, and the untrammelled liberty for those days may have occurred to him. 'I could not keep you in honour. The church of which we are all three devout members,' and he smiled, 'will not admit divorce, so that you cannot marry him and share his dearly loved fortune. Nor should I permit a divorce. What you are to do is to leave my house immediately, and with it leave all except what you brought with you. What you care for most is comfort, luxury, even, and as far as ten thousand pounds, which you have justly earned, can bring it to you, you shall have it. In two hours I will return with your money.' Then he mounted his horse, rode at full speed, and presented the cheque at the Bank.

"When it was cashed and he was, in his deliberate way, descending the steps, he met a frantic, exhausted man with a wild light in his eyes, who, having flung himself from his panting horse, was rushing into the bank. Old Baré lifted his hat. 'Too late, monsieur, by half a minute. I have cashed your cheque, so it will not be possible to draw out your capital before I arrive.'

"That," continued the Colonel, "was the way to punish—the reasonable, just way, too, for the woman should not have borne it all, as is now the custom. Old Baré accepted the fact that her betrayer owed her something, and he made him pay it, and he had the joy of turning the sword round and round in his heart. An encounter! Bah! Duels are for blunderers, neophytes, the indiscriminating, common herd. But for an artist, for a student of character, he will learn his man and hurt him in the secret, tender spot. This I rank as genius."

There was a murmur of dissenting voices, but the Colonel had already donned his overcoat and was limping out of the room.

ADRIFT ON A BELL BUOY.

WHEN I was twelve years old, during the summer vacation of 1860, I spent the month of August on the Government schooner *Ranger*, then charged with the duty of supplying oil and provisions to the lighthouses on the South Coast. Sometimes the *Ranger* set buoys and assisted revenue cutters in taking soundings; so we had a busy time on the whole.

One day early in the month our captain, whose name was Gardner, learned that the bell-buoy at Shellham had gone adrift, after having been run into by a vessel. Next morning we sailed from Shellham to look for it, and found it before long near Vineyard Sound. But it was not now adrift. It was in tow of the *Sea Hawk*, one of a class of vessels that go in search of derelict ships, securing their chains, anchors, or anything of value that can be taken from them.

The skipper of the *Sea Hawk* said that he had found the buoy. He objected to surrendering it without receiving pay for it. Our captain ended the dispute by ordering him to take the buoy into Portsmouth, where we would call for it.

"You'll have to pay for it," cried the *Sea Hawk's* captain, in a squeaky voice, across a wide space of water, as we left him. "You'll have to pay for it yet," was what he squeaked late that evening when our skipper was leaving the *Sea Hawk*, after taking the buoy without having made any payment. Whether Trinity House did or not admit the squeaky captain's claim I know not to this day.

The buoy was to be hoisted to our deck and taken to its former position at Shellham bar. But instead of hoisting it that evening our captain, as the hour was late, resolved to leave it all night moored to the *Ranger's* stern by the same rope the *Sea Hawk* had used in towing it.

Somehow it had fascinated me. What a weird, dismal-looking object it was, bobbing up and down. Then I wondered why its bell did not ring, though there was movement in the water about us. In the dusk it seemed like a human being; and, indeed, the round, cage-like basket on its top, which was its distinguishing mark in the daytime, was very suggestive of a person's head.

An impulse to try to make its bell ring took possession of me. Once I crawled half over the stern, meaning to lower myself to the buoy by its rope, but of this I thought better, and crept back to deck. Then I went to my berth for a while. Still I could not sleep.

"What is the reason that bell does not ring?" kept running in my head. So after a long time I went up and sat down on the cabin skylight. Glancing at the clock within it was one o'clock in the morning.

The night was beautiful, though breezy. Our *Ranger's* mast and rigging was clearly shown against the sky. I lay back and watched the black painted end of the mast as it traced all sorts of fantastic figures in and out among the stars; for there was a gentle ground swell, and the schooner was idly rocking on it.

The tide was running out, and I could plainly see the *Sea Hawk* some distance astern, for there was a clear, waning moon. The surf, as it broke on the beach, could be plainly heard.

Going again into the steerage, I took a blanket and pillow from my berth, and spreading the blanket on the deck I lay down and tried to sleep. But all was of no use; my thoughts would revert to the buoy and why the bell did not ring.

Giving up all thoughts of sleep, I arose, walked aft and looked at the buoy. There it was, tugging at the hawser, for the tide had swept it across the stern and off the quarter of the schooner.

Taking hold of the rope, I found I could draw it up closer. The bell was there all right—why did it not ring? I must know. So, tying the rope to a cleat that was close at hand, I slid down the hawser until my feet touched the ball-like basket on its top.

The cold, damp iron chilled my bare feet; for when I last arose from my berth I had not stopped to put on my shoes and stockings At first I thought my courage would fail me, but the sight of the bell so close at hand renewed my curiosity. Letting go my hold on the rope, I clambered down the iron cage that held the bell.

The buoy, which was made of iron in the form of a hollow pyramid with its apex in the water, had a top surface which was flat and about five feet in diameter. Over this was the pointed lattice framework in which the bell was hung.

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A large hole had been stove in the lattice framework by the vessel which had set the buoy adrift. As the frame was about five feet high, I had no difficulty in crawling inside. Putting my hand on the tongue of the bell, I found that it was tightly covered with canvas sail-cloth, which the men on the *Sea-Hawk* had tied there to stop its constant ringing.

For some minutes I was so enraptured with my strange surroundings that I paid no attention to the *Ranger*. When I did glance towards her I was amazed to find the buoy adrift.

The rope that held it to the vessel had been much worn by the constant chafing it had received while the *Sea Hawk* towed the buoy. It had let me pass down safely, but when my weight was added to the tossing buoy, after the rope had been drawn up taut, it gave way, and the tide was sweeping the buoy out of the harbour, with myself a prisoner on it.

Terrified at the idea of being carried out to sea under such strange conditions, I screamed. But the *Ranger* was now a hundred yards away, the surf was roaring, and no shipmate heard me. The buoy moved on a course right past the *Sea Hawk*. Oh, how sweet would that old skipper's squeaky voice have sounded, could I have heard it reply to my screams! But everybody seemed asleep on the sloop.

I thought of throwing myself overboard and trying to swim to the vessel, but the sight of the phosphorescent water frightened me. The buoy had a piece of cable attached to its sunken end. This, in the shoal water of the harbour, dragged along the bottom, and a bright streak in the water marked its course. This scared me, because I could not imagine what it could be.

The land and lights ashore appeared like a huge black cloud, with here and there a little star peeping out. It was useless to call for help to that distant vision. God seemed nearer. In the agony of my heart I knelt and prayed fervently for aid.

After that I felt better, and remembered the bell above my head. Could I call some boat by ringing it? I quickly clutched at the canvas covering and tried to tear it off. But my little fingers bled as I tore my nails in vain attempts to loosen the hard cloth.

By this time the waves had grown larger, and they were continually washing over the buoy. I was wet to the skin; and as the morning air was cold I was soon chilled through.

Just then I saw something alight on the top of the buoy. One of the owls from the mainland, in its flight across the harbour, had sought a resting-place over me. As I half-rose from my sitting position, the bird gave a hoot and looked down on me with its large, bright eyes. Then it rose from its perch, circled round for a moment, probably wondering what strange creature I was, and flew away. I was glad to see it go, for its eyes seemed to pierce me through.

When out in the Sound, and fast drifting towards the open sea, I made another attempt to loosen the canvas. Standing upright, I caught sight of a bright object in the water, which seemed to be following the buoy. What could it be?

It was long and looked like a snake as it followed wriggling after. I shut my eyes, for I dared not look at it. Still groping with my hands on the canvas, I found a knot at the top that in the darkness I had not felt before.

It was easily untied, and the muffle was soon removed. As I struck the tongue of the bell on its side it rang out a sound that caused me to fall flat on the buoy and cover my ears with my hands. Now with the tossing the ringing continued.

Oh, how its deep tone did strike into my ears! *Dong, dong, dong, dong!*—would it never stop? Sometimes for a moment it remained quiet, and I would uncover my ears, then it would start to ringing again, and its awful sounds penetrated my brain. It seemed as though I must faint.

With the swash of the water, the deep dong of the bell, my wet clothing, my numb limbs, and an occasional screech of a sea-fowl my senses were fast leaving me. Then I caught sight of the fiery serpent again, and lost consciousness.

When I regained my senses I was lying on the after hatch of a fishing vessel, and the captain and officers stood around me. They had seen the buoy at the first streak of daylight, with my unconscious body lying across its top. They had sent a boat and brought me on board. Late in the afternoon, after a long, warm sleep, we reached Southsea. Just as we were moored I saw the *Ranger* coming to anchor.

She lowered a boat, and soon it was drawn up on the beach. As Captain Gardner stepped out I reached out my hand, which the amazed man clasped with joy. He and his crew had supposed that I had fallen overboard.

As he took me back to the *Ranger* in his boat we passed the buoy, and the memory of the fiery serpent was brought back painfully. Captain Gardner inquired the reason of my emotion, and I told him of the last few moments before I had fainted.

"Well, boy," he said, "your story has a strange sound, but let's pull the boat up alongside of the buoy, and perhaps I can explain the mystery of the fiery fish."

When beside the buoy he pointed his finger and said, "Yes, I am right. There is your snake, boy."

Down beneath the water, and hanging idly to the broken cable below the buoy, was a long string of kelpish seaweed. It was alive with a fine species of animalculæ, that had shone in the darkness with a brightness that might well have deceived a more experienced person than I was then.

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The Face of Flame

IT was the sacred hour of the pipe, and the men who sat in the verandah of the chief hotel at Scarborough were worshipping in concert.

"Craddock," said the physician, breaking a long silence, "I am a believer in the evil eye."

"And a man of science!" exclaimed his friend in an exaggeration of despair. "To what are we coming?"

"I am a man of science," retorted the other firmly, "and therefore I do not doubt that the phenomenon is capable of some simple solution. The trouble is to find the key. Anyhow, I have myself witnessed lately not less than two very curious and interesting manifestations of the phenomenon."

"Besides the Eternal Feminine?" suggested the lawyer.

But the other man said slowly: "I was travelling in America a year ago. At one of the stations on the way from New York to Chicago two people entered the sleeping-car—a man about my own age and a woman some ten years younger, evidently his wife. The habit of observing without staring becomes second nature to the physician, and an apparently casual glance told me all I cared to know. He was just the ordinary, peevish, masculine invalid; while her every movement told of patience learned in a hard school.

"I turned in rather late, and during the night I had a call for professional aid. Hastily obeying the summons of the conductor, I followed him to the private room occupied by this couple. We went in and he locked and bolted the door. The porters had not observed us; the passengers were presumably sleeping. The conductor, whose peculiar expression of countenance had struck me earlier in the night, sank on the couch like one whom despair had bereft of his senses, whilst I glanced hurriedly round. On the floor, almost at my feet, was stretched the woman, apparently in a state of collapse; on the bed lay the husband—dead!

"I saw that she held tightly clenched a small empty phial. It was labelled 'Strychnia.'

"A suppressed groan at my side startled even my professional nerves. 'For goodness sake, doctor,' said a harsh voice in my ear, 'keep this thing quiet for awhile!'

"I turned and beheld the conductor in the act of opening the door. He went out, leaving me alone in a situation which was unpleasant even for a physician. The sight of the phial in the hand of such a woman had given me a strange shock. I proceeded to make as careful an examination of the dead man as circumstances could permit. 'Poison—the vehicle, strychnia,' I muttered. A hand was laid on my arm, and in shifting my position I confronted the woman. Though handsome, she was no longer what is termed a young woman, yet she had the air of an innocent child.

"'Doctor,' she whispered, holding out the phial, 'I tried to take it from him, but I was too late.' Her lips trembled, and in a moment her cheeks were wet with tears.

"'Tell me what you can,' I said quietly. She began to speak in low uncertain tones:

"'My husband is—was—an invalid. Some physicians said that there was serious trouble; others, that he was chiefly hypochondriac He thought he would like to try California, and we were on our way to San Diego. I did not mind where we went, so long as it helped him. That was all I cared for—all I have cared for—for years!'

"'He—my husband—was restless, and about midnight called for the strychnia, of which he was in the habit of taking a dose when suffering from nervous exhaustion. As he had already used the prescribed quantity, I suggested that he should wait awhile, and that meantime I would ring for boiling water and prepare him a cup of beef-tea. He consented, but grew impatient and opened the door to hurry the porter.'

"She paused again, as if her task were a hard one, then proceeded: 'Suddenly he fell back on the bed, with his hands before his face as if warding off some evil thing. Alarmed, I, too, looked out, but saw nothing but the porter awaiting orders, and heard only the departing footsteps of the conductor in the passage. What my husband saw, Heaven only knows. After awhile I quieted him.'

"She shuddered, and closed her eyes for a moment, then opened them and fixed them on mine, probing them as one who is confident of her facts, but seeks contradiction for peace of mind's sake.

"'He always saw one thing when a death was going to take place in the family. It was a face—a face of flame, with dead eyes. The flame was white, and composed of little fiery tongues. He had been asleep—and so, I think, had I—when he clutched me by the wrist, shrieking: "The face! the face! Don't you see it, Alice? Here—pressed against the window? Heavens, he has killed me! I am a dead man!" In vain I tried to persuade him that what he saw was merely the effect of flying sparks from the locomotive on the darkness of the night. He grew wilder—lost his mind, I believe—seized the strychnia bottle, and before I could prevent him——ah! you know the rest!'

"She sank back upon the cushions, her extraordinary power of self-control exhausted. Before daylight the conductor returned. I observed him narrowly, for a strange idea, evolved from the woman's recital, had taken possession of my mind. Could it be that I had stumbled on one of those phenomena, the question of whose existence has been for centuries a subject of dispute between scientific men?

"The corpse was removed to the baggage car, and there I went in search of the conductor.

"The remnant of humanity, rigidly outlined beneath its shrouding sheet, appeared to be the only occupant of the car. The lamps were out, and daylight was streaming through the half-open door, revealing the piled-up trunks, and—what was that in the corner by the dead man? I stepped over. There, hanging from a hook in the roof, in close proximity to the corpse, and with the wan light of morning on his face, was the conductor—a suicide!

"I found a note addressed to me, pinned on the conductor's coat. I had the presence of mind to possess myself of it before making known this fresh tragedy. You can believe that for the lady's sake I spared no pains to prevent her husband's death going into the papers under sensational headlines. I succeeded. 'Death by misadventure' was a true bill; the sick man had taken an overdose of strychnia by mistake. That was the simple truth, yet not the whole truth. For the conductor's relatives I could not thus provide; but the real cause of his death must for ever remain unknown to the world, or at least until science claims her own, as she will, as she must, some day.

"That note said:

"'Doctor, I can bear my life no more. When these spells come upon me I am better dead, as my father, who was similarly afflicted, thought before me. I felt one coming on last night, and as I was hurrying away to my quarters I met that poor sick man face to face. I could not help myself, doctor. Whoever meets my eye when I have one of those spells is doomed either to death or some terrible misfortune! You won't believe me, I know, but I have the Evil Eye—not always, but often enough, Heaven knows! Explain this if you can, doctor, for the sake of some other poor wretch who may be in the same fix as I am.

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